REPORT

to the

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

From

The Division of Accountability
South Carolina Education Oversight Committee

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Introduction

The Education Accountability Act of 1998 establishes a Division of Accountability within the Education Oversight Committee (EOC). The Division has been interpreted to be the staff of the EOC and, consistent with the outline of reporting provided in the Act, we submit this report. The report frames progress toward the 2010 goal with data on student performance and results of several studies examining SC's progress toward the 2010 goal.

While SC schools, districts and state entities have maintained their commitment to high standards, we are experiencing the frustrations and disappointments of early implementation. The data presented in this report indicate that while we have made incremental improvements, incremental gains are insufficient to be "one of the five fastest improving states in the country." Ross Boyle in his strategic plan for the SC Department of Commerce wrote, "Current efforts are evolutionary when a revolution is needed."

The analyses of student performance, examination of ratings simulations and evaluations of professional development programs suggest that attention must be paid to critical groups of students:

Students residing in rural South Carolina;
Students whose families are economically disadvantaged;
Underachieving African-American students; and
Students scoring at the lowest level on academic assessments.

The system is not working for these students and the future of all South Carolinians depends upon our ability to serve them well.

The Division of Accountability offers evidence and recommendations based upon our work over the last year. We hope you find it useful as you deliberate and fulfill the responsibilities of the EOC.

The 2010 Goal and Academic Performance

The 2010 Goal

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) established, with the concurrence of statewide education and community leaders, the following goal for the school improvement efforts in South Carolina:

> By 2010, South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country

Historically, South Carolina's school achievement has been ranked at or near the bottom in comparisons with other states. But the current ranking does not deter South Carolinians from their aspirations for the system. In a series of focus groups across South Carolina, the EOC learned that South Carolinians believe their schools should be held to national standards and, despite disparate achievement patterns, that all of South Carolina's students should be held to the same standards (Brown, 1999).

How then do we determine if South Carolina's relative position in rankings of the states is improving and what are the indicators of growth? The EOC determined that academic (school results) measures used by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) would be the criteria for determining goal accomplishment. Although the NEGP measures thirty-three factors, many of these address results outside the direction of schools. The academic measures to be used include 1) performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests; 2) high school completion rates; and 3) advanced placement passage rates. Verified and reported externally, these measures provide a stable set of criteria from which to develop comparisons.

(1) Performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a federal project established in 1969. NAEP reports performance of American elementary and secondary students in several subject areas. Representative samples of students are tested every two years in the nation's public and private schools at grades four, eight and twelve. NAEP content area tests vary according to the year and include reading, mathematics, science, writing, history, geography and the arts. The South Carolina curriculum content standards, which form the foundation for the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT), incorporate the content assessed by the NAEP tests.

The sampling process ensures reliable state-level data. Approximately 2500 students are tested per grade in each state. More than 120,000 students participate nationally.

NAEP scores are reported in two ways: scale scores and achievement levels (performance categories). The NAEP achievement levels are defined below:

Basic	This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade
Proficient	This level represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter
Advanced	This level signifies superior performance

NAEP results for South Carolina for 1996 and 1998 are shown in Table One below. Results from 2000 testing are not available at this writing.[1]

The National Assessment of Educational Progress tests different content areas in alternate years. Current scores are reported in the table below.

Table One
National Assessment of Educational Progress
Comparison of SC and Other Jurisdictions Performance

	Average Scale Scores for South Carolina, the Southeast, and the Nation			Comparison of SC with Other Jurisdictions		
	South Carolina	The Southeast	The Nation	Higher than SC*	Same as & Including SC	Below SC*
1996 Grade 8 Science (0-300)	139	141	148	31	7	5
1996 Grade 4 Math (0-500)	213	216	222	32	9	4
1996 Grade 8 Math (0-500)	261	264	271	27	11	4
1998 Grade 4 Reading (0-500)	210	210	215	25	12	4
1998 Grade 8 Reading (0-500)	255	258	261	23	11	4

(Administered to a sample of students, cyclically, in participating jurisdictions including states, U.S. territories, and Department of Defense schools.)
*Number of jurisdictions with significantly higher/lower percentages of students scoring at or above Proficient.

A review of the performance suggests two findings: South Carolina is ranked low among states, but not at the very bottom and the distance between South Carolina's average scale scores and the national average is not insurmountable. Further analysis of the NAEP performance indicates little growth (since 1992) in the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient designation. Only 22 percent of SC fourth graders scored proficient or above on reading. In mathematics, SC also showed no gains from 1992. Only 12 and 14 percent of fourth and eighth graders respectively scored proficient or above. The national range extended from 3 to 31 percent for grade four and 5 to 34 percent for grade eight.

(2) High School Completion Rate: The NEGP reports South Carolina's high school completion rate as the percentage of the non-high-school enrolled population ages 18-24 that hold high school credentials. According to the 1997 data, reported in the 1999 Goals Panel Report, South Carolina has an 89 percent completion rate. The SC State Department of Education reports the completion rate as a measure of students who were in a class in grade 8 and completed grade 12. That rate is 71.7 percent (or a loss of 28.3 percent of the class). The range across the state is quite wide, from 99.1 percent in York District Four to 44.3 percent in Clarendon District Three. The difference between the SC measure and the NEGP measure points to the impact of alternative and adult education routes to the high school credential and suggests that these programs are significant contributors to South Carolina's move forward. The NEGP reports that the rate has increased from 83 percent in 1990. Interestingly, the range of high school completion rate nationally is between 75 and 95 percent. This range is much narrower than the range within South Carolina.

The completion rate and the inter-district variations suggest an unanswered challenge for South Carolina. Over the past several years passage of the high school exit examination document improved performance, but the large numbers of students who do not graduate when eighth to twelfth grade progress is measured belie that success.

[1] Further information about NAEP can be obtained from the following web site: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/site/home.asp/.

(3) Advanced Placement Passage Rate: The College Board administers the Advanced Placement (AP) Program. The program was introduced in the 1960s to permit qualified high school students to earn college credit while in high schools. The curriculum, teacher training and assessments are aligned to ensure that the rigor and quality of the program is uniform across the nation. Beginning with the 1984 Education Improvement Act, South Carolina's General Assembly has appropriated funds to pay exam fees for South Carolina students, to support the teacher institutes and to provide supplementary materials for the program. Approximately 90 percent of the nation's colleges and universities accept AP credits in some manner.[2]

Exams are scored on a one to five grading scale. Generally, higher education institutions accept scores of three or higher, although the more selective institutions require a four or a five score. The grading scale is shown below:

5= Extremely well qualified
4= Well qualified
3= Qualified
2= Possible qualified
1= No recommendations

Table Two
Number of AP Tests Taken & Average Score
(National & State) 1986-2000

YEAR	National		(Mean Grade)	Qualifying Percentage	State		(Mean Grade)	Qualifying Percentage
	Students	Exams			Students	Exams		
84	No Data Available			69%	2,400	3,406	No Data Available	55%
85				66%	4,670	6,262		39%
86	175,689	238,507	(3.05)	67%	5,181	7,152	(2.51)	48%
87	200,228	278,037	(3.04)	69%	5,889	7,980	(2.60)	51%
88	No Data Available				6,254	8,767	No Data Available	53%
89					6,125	8,521		56%
90	257,625	378,106	(3.03)	66%	6,526	9,331	(2.72)	55%
91	281,628	415,336	(2.97)	64%	6,598	9,657	(2.86)	54%
92	307,073	453,524	(3.01)	64%	7,000	10,205	(2.98)	55%
93	No Data Available			63%	7,523	11,105	(2.70)	53%
94	368,780	558,330	(3.02)	65%	8,140	12,125	(2.77)	55%
95	407,030	628,393	(2.93)	61%	8,514	13,124	(2.74)	50%
96	432,751	673,775	(2.95)	62%	9,036	13,895	(2.71)	51%
97	467,133	734,590	(2.98)	63%	8,962	14,169	(2.67)	53%
98	509,895	811,239	(3.13)	63%	9,269	14,921	(2.73)	54%
99	568,021	923,039	(3.10)	62%	9,402	14,975	(2.86)	55%
00	617,547	1,020,016	(2.97)	62%	9,103	14,560	(2.77)	55%

[2] For additional information on the Advanced Placement Program, contact the web site: http://www.collegeboard.org/.

Successful student performance on advanced placement tests rose dramatically between 1991 and 1999. According to the NEGP, in 1991 only 69 students per 1000 scored three or above on Advanced Placement tests; by 1999 that rate had grown to 100 per 1000 eleventh and twelfth graders. The SC State Department of Education reports the data somewhat differently from the National Education Goals Panel. According to the SC State Department of Education, in 1998 14,921 exams were administered, with 54.2 percent of exams scored 3 or higher.

Other National Measures

Although not specified as evaluation measures for the 2010 Goal, South Carolina schools are evaluated informally through the publication of other performance results; most notably, the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), the American College Test (ACT), the Terra Nova and other NEGP measures. South Carolina performance on these measures is described below.

(1) The SAT is one of the most widely recognized and publicized student assessments. Historically used for admissions information in private, selective colleges the SAT is used now by a majority of private and public colleges and universities. The test measures students' verbal and mathematical abilities and provides information on the students' preparation for college. The SAT is not administered to all students and the College Board (1988) advises that "using these scores in aggregate form as a single measure to rank or rate teachers, educational institutions, districts, or states is invalid because it does not include all students. . . in being incomplete, this use is inherently unfair." Trend data are published and disaggregated in a variety of ways.[3] The SAT is scored on a cumulative 1600 point scale (800 is the highest possible score for each component).

South Carolina student performance on the SAT has improved in recent years. The 2000 report indicates a 12-point gain, which tied for the largest increase in the nation.

Table Three
South Carolina and National Average SAT Scores
1996-2000

Year	South Carolina			Nation		
	Verbal	Math	Composite Score	Verbal	Math	Composite Score
1996	480	474	954	505	508	1013
1997	479	474	953	505	511	1016
1998	478	473	951	505	512	1017
1999	479	475	954	505	511	1016
2000	484	482	966	505	514	1019
1996-2000	+4	+8	+12	0	+6	+6

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2000.

South Carolina's LIFE Scholarship program is tied to SAT performance. For first-time entering college freshmen in 2000, the LIFE Scholarship requirement is a score of at least 1,050 on the SAT and a "B" average. Data presented in Table Four indicate the percentage of public school students meeting the SAT requirement for LIFE Scholarships.

[3] Further information on the Scholastic Assessment Test can be obtained from the web site: http://www.collegeboard.org/.

Table Four
Public School Students Meeting SAT Requirement for Tuition Assistance
(at a four-year college or university)

	All Students	Females	Males	African-Americans	Whites
Percent	33.6	30.0	38.5	10.7	43.9
Number	6,518	3,323	3,195	546	5,015
Tested	19,382	11,089	8,293	5,110	11.431

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2000.

(2) The American College Test (ACT): The ACT is an achievement test used by many colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The ACT includes four tests: English, Mathematics, Reading and Science Reasoning. Much like the cautions about interpretation of SAT performance, the reader is reminded that the ACT is a voluntary test administered to students paying a fee and is an inappropriate measure for the evaluation of teachers, programs, school and districts. The scale score for each subtest, as well as the composite, ranges from 1 to 36.

A comparison of SC student performance and student performance nationally is detailed in the table below.

Table Five
ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite
South Carolina and the Nation
1995-96 to 1999-2000

South Carolina

Year	# of students	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
1995-96	6,648	18.5	18.8	19.4	19.2	19.1
1996-97	4,994	18.1	18.9	19.1	19.0	18.9
1997-98	5,385	18.4	18.8	19.4	19.0	19.0
1998-99	6,766	18.6	19.0	19.3	19.2	19.1
1999-00	9,051	18.7	19.2	19.5	19.2	19.3

Nation

Year	# of students	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
1995-96	924,663	20.3	20.2	21.3	21.1	20.9
1996-97	959,301	20.3	20.6	21.3	21.1	21.0
1997-98	995,039	20.4	20.6	21.3	21.1	21.0
1998-99	1,019,053	20.5	20.7	21.4	21.0	21.0
1999-00	1,065,138	20.5	20.7	21.4	21.0	21.0

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2000.

South Carolina increased both its mean composite score and the number of students taking the ACT between 1999 and 2000. The state's scores continue to indicate inadequate preparation for college-level work. ACT advises that the cut-off scores indicating preparation for college level work are 22 for English; 24 for biology and 25 for chemistry; 23 for mathematics; and 22 for reading. ACT indicates that scores of 16-19 indicate "only minimal readiness" for college. South Carolina's students perform less well on the ACT than do students in all other states, except Mississippi.[4]

(3) The Terra Nova: As a verification of South Carolina student performance relative to national performance, the General Assembly required that a sample of students be assessed using a nationally normed test. The sampling plan identifies students in three grades each year. The Terra Nova, a CTBS-McGraw Hill Test, is used for the national performance relationship. The test was

[4] More information on the ACT can be obtained from the web site: http://www.act.org/.

administered in grades 3, 6, and 9 in 1999 and in grades 5, 8 and 11 in 2000 to a representative sample of approximately 7500 students per grade level.

The Terra Nova is not aligned completely with the South Carolina curriculum content standards. Terra Nova is designed to measure concepts, processes, and skills taught throughout the nation. Test items are classified according to content categories that reflect educational objectives commonly found in state and district curriculum guides; in major textbooks, basal series, and instructional programs; and in national standards publications.

As a norm-referenced test, Terra Nova is used to gauge the performance of South Carolina students with respect to national performance levels. A student's score is interpreted in the framework of comparison to the scores of other students. For example, if a student scored at the 50th percentile, one would interpret that student's score as the same as or higher than 50 percent of the norm-group that took the same test. The items on Terra Nova are not tailored to fully assess South Carolina standards. The study concluded that neither the match nor the coverage of the tests would provide sufficient evidence, across the board, to support decisions at the student, school, district, or state level relative to the South Carolina Content Standards.

The study was conducted in the summer 2000 and included the participation of 31 educators examining the content of eleven different test forms (grades 3-11) in comparison with the South Carolina standards. The study looked at the *match* of the test items to the standards, the *coverage* of the standards by the tests, and the *cognitive complexity* of the items. Match was defined as the extent to which the test items match the standards and reported as the percentage of items on each test that matched at least one strand in the South Carolina standards. The Mathematics tests exhibit a high degree of match through grade 6, and then drop dramatically, ranging from 72% to 81%. The Reading and Language Arts tests generally exhibited a higher degree of match with the exception of grade 7. Coverage is defined as the extent to which the content strands, content standards, and the content bullets are represented by test items. In Mathematics, with the exception of the Computer and Technology strand at grades 5 and 8 and Number and Numeration Systems at grade 11, all strands were represented by at least one item. The percentage of standards and bullets represented by at least one item was somewhat lower with between 40% and 70% of standards and 15% and 67% of bullets. In Reading and Language Arts, neither Listening nor Speaking was tested at any grade level. (Speaking is not tested by PACT either.) Research Skills were tested sporadically, and most Writing matches were editing skills. Few South Carolina standards were represented by sufficient items to warrant "mastery" information. Cognitive Complexity is defined as the extent to which a range of cognitive abilities is tapped by the test items. It was calculated as the percentage of items at each cognitive level corresponding to Bloom's taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). The tests do tap a range of cognitive levels. The Mathematics tests appear to be less cognitively demanding, in terms of the cognitive complexity of the items, than the Reading and Language Arts tests.

South Carolina performance on the Terra Nova in 1999 is shown below. The State Department of Education has not released the results of the 2000 testing at this writing.

Table Six
South Carolina Student Performance on the Terra Nova
Percentage of Students Scoring Above 50th National Percentile Rank
Spring 1999 (SDE: October 1999 Report)

Grade	Mathematics	Reading	Language	Total Battery
3	49.8	44.7	48.5	49.1
6	42.1	43.1	41.4	41.6
9	43.7	45.0	44.3	42.2

(Administered to a sample of students at three grades annually.)

(4) Other NEGP Measures: Although not used in the evaluation of the EOC-defined goal for 2010 the National Education Goals Panel reports on indicators related to accomplishment of the eight national education goals. According to the 1999 Report, South Carolina improved significantly on 13 measures of progress during the 1990s (see below). The 2000 Report is expected in early January 2001.[5]

Goal 1: Ready to Learn

1. South Carolina reduced the percentage of infants born with one or more of four health risks (from 43 percent in 1990 to 38 percent in 1997).
2. South Carolina increased the percentage of mothers who received early prenatal care (from 69 percent in 1990 to 80 percent in 1997).
3. South Carolina increased the number of children with disabilities enrolled in preschool (from 52 per 1000 3- to 5- year olds in 1991 to 69 per 1000 3- to 5- year olds in 1998).

Goal 2: School Completion

1. South Carolina increased the percentage of 18-24 year-olds who have a high school credential (from 83 percent in 1990 to 88 percent in 1997).

Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship

1. South Carolina increased the number of Advanced Placement examinations receiving grades high enough to qualify students for college credit. (The number of AP exams receiving a grade of 3 or higher increased from 69 per 1000 eleventh and twelfth graders in 1991 to 100 per 1000 eleventh and twelfth graders in 1999).

Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development

1. South Carolina increased the percentage of public school teachers who received support from a master or mentor teacher during their first year of teaching (from 24 percent in 1991 to 29 percent in 1994).

Goal 5: Mathematics and Science

1. South Carolina increased the proportion of degrees earned by all students that were awarded in mathematics and science (from 37 percent in 1991 to 42 percent in 1996).
2. South Carolina increased the proportion of degrees earned by minority students that were awarded in mathematics and science (from 36 percent in 1991 to 38 percent in 1996).
3. South Carolina increased the proportion of degrees earned by female students that were awarded in mathematics and science (from 34 percent in 1991 to 39 percent in 1996).

Goal 6: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning

1. South Carolina increased the percentage of US citizens who reported that they were registered to vote (from 61 percent in 1988 to 68 percent in 1996).
2. South Carolina increased the percentage of US citizens who reported that they voted (from 50 percent in 1988 to 55 percent in 1996).
3. South Carolina increased the percentage of high school graduates who immediately enrolled in college in any state (from 43 percent in 1992 to 59 percent in 1996).

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[5] Further information on the National Education Goals Panel can be obtained from the web site: http://www.negp.gov/.

Goal 7: Safe, Disciplined and Alcohol- and Drug-free Schools

1. South Carolina reduced the percentage of public high school students reporting that they carried a weapon on school property (from 14 percent in 1993 to 10 percent in 1997).

South Carolina declined on three measures of progress:

Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development

1. The percentage of public secondary school teachers who held a teaching certificate in their main teaching assignment decreased from 98 percent in 1991 to 95 percent in 1994.

Goal 7: Safe, Disciplined and Alcohol- and Drug-free Schools

1. The percentage of public high school students who reported using marijuana increased from 12 percent in 1991 to 27 percent in 1997;
2. The percentage of public secondary school teachers who reported that student disruptions interfered with their teaching increased from 37 percent in 1991 to 49 percent in 1994.

State Measures

The statewide testing program, as reconstructed under the Education Accountability Act, incorporates measures of first and second grade readiness, criterion-referenced assessments in four content areas (mathematics, English language arts, science and social studies) for grades three through eight, a standards-based high school exit examination and high school end-of-course assessments. Through the 2000-2001 academic year, only the grades three through eight assessments in English language arts and mathematics are in full implementation. The first and second grade readiness assessments and grades three through eight science assessments are being field-tested.

(1) The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery: Soon to be replaced by the SC Readiness Assessment, the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB) has been used to determine readiness for first grade since 1979. The test results are to be used to provide appropriate developmental activities for first grade students. The percent of students meeting the readiness standard for the last five years follows:

Year	Percent Ready
1996	75.8
1997	79.
1998	81.2
1999	83.9
2000	85.3

(2) Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests: In 2000 the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT) were administered to students in grades three through eight in two content areas. Statewide performance indicates gains as displayed on the next page.

Table Seven
Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests, Grades 3-8
English Language Arts and Mathematics
1999-2000

English Language Arts

Grade	Below Basic		Basic		Proficient		Advanced	
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
3	35	26	37	34	26	36	2	4
4	35	28	37	35	26	33	3	4
5	35	29	39	44	24	25	3	2
6	37	35	39	33	21	25	3	7
7	37	32	41	41	21	23	3	4
8	38	35	41	41	19	20	3	4

Mathematics

Grade	Below Basic		Basic		Proficient		Advanced	
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
3	44	31	38	44	13	16	5	9
4	45	38	37	38	13	16	5	8
5	47	41	37	39	12	12	4	8
6	47	41	37	36	12	15	5	7
7	48	41	36	37	11	13	5	9
8	49	38	36	42	10	13	5	7

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2000.

PACT results between the first two years of test administration yield positive, but not surprising, increases. Historically student results on tests improve at a faster rate in the earlier years of administration. SC's challenge is to sustain that rate of increase over time.

The EOC determined that the school ratings methodology should be sensitive to gains schools accomplish within the Below Basic category. Splitting Below Basic at the two standard errors level enable an analysis to determine students who are in serious academic jeopardy. EOC analyses indicate that approximately 19.8 percent of students are scoring in Below Basic 1 (greater than two standard errors below the cut score) on English Language Arts tests and 21.9 percent of students are scoring in Below Basic 1 on Mathematics tests. These students have severe learning needs and should be provided extensive supplementary opportunities.

(3) High School Exit Examination: Currently South Carolina high school students must complete successfully the exit examination developed under the Basic Skills Assessment Program. Initially administered in the tenth grade, students have multiple opportunities to pass subtests in reading, writing and mathematics before graduation.

Passage rates have fluctuated considerably over the fifteen-year administration of the examination. Highest in 1990 and 1991, performance dipped in the mid-1990s and began to rise again in 2000. Data for the last five years are displayed in Table xxx below:

Table Eight
High School Exit Examination: Performance of Tenth Graders
Percentage of Students Meeting Standards by Subject Area and All Tests

Year	Reading	Mathematics	Writing	All Tests
1996	83.2	77.3	82.1	64.7
1997	82.6	75.4	84.1	65.9
1998	81.5	75.1	83.8	64.9
1999	81.9	76.1	82.8	63.6
2000	82.7	77.3	86.6	66.5

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2000.

The exit examination data offer chilling prospects for student performance on the standards-based exit examination. Passage rates on the current basic skills examination contribute to the discouragement of students from completing high school (as evidenced by the grade eight to twelve survival data and the cumulative dropout rate). Unless the high school curriculum is transformed quickly, students are in jeopardy when the next exit examination is administered. Yet, the professional development evaluation and data from participation in state-funded activities suggest a much lower participation rate among high school teachers. Without strong understanding of the content standards and standards-based assessments, teachers cannot be effective. Performance of SC's middle grades students on PACT 1999 and 2000 indicates that a significant percentage of students are entering high school with academic deficiencies.

Implementation of State Standards and Assessments

South Carolina's improvement effort is designed to ensure that South Carolina students achieve at competitive levels nationally and internationally. Throughout the 1990s South Carolina educators developed curriculum content standards which incorporate the recommendations of international and national organizations in the academic disciplines. A standards-based assessment system has been initiated to accompany the standards.

Utilization of the Standards in Instruction

SC educators, students and their parents have published curriculum content standards in four disciplines for use. The disciplines are mathematics, reading/English language arts, science, and in Fall 2000, social studies. These standards reflect what students should know and be able to do in grades kindergarten through twelve. Each set of standards has been reviewed by panels of national and state leaders in the content area to determine that SC students are taught a curriculum that enables them to compete successfully with students from around the world. In 2000 the Fordham Foundation reviewed content standards from the fifty states and rated SC's standards third in the nation, a rise from twenty-eighth in 1998.

To support implementation of the standards, the General Assembly appropriated additional monies for professional development: $7 million for professional development on the standards, $3 million for the Governor's Institute on Reading and either maintenance or increased funding for a number of other professional development programs (e.g., Geographic Alliance, Science and Math Hubs, Roper Mountain Science Center).

But funding does not ensure that the professional development activities are as effective as policy-makers intend. Key findings from a comprehensive evaluation of professional development indicate the following (Policy Studies Associates, 2000):

(1) Although many SC educators think that the professional development available to them is worthwhile, it appears that professional development misses the mark for many others. For these teachers and principals, professional development may not meet their needs, reflect their input in planning, or contribute much to improve practice or greater student learning. For more than 80 percent of the educators who responded to our surveys, professional development does not include adequate follow-up;

(2) Despite the fact that professional development does not get very high marks from teachers and principals, many SC schools and districts appear to be reasonably positive environments for professional development. In these places, teachers and principals agree that professional development is encouraged as part of their work and that there are resources and facilities in place to support their participation;

(3) The problem in these places is time, or, to be precise, the lack of time. There is not enough time to take advantage of what is learned in various workshops and training, there is not enough time to engage in informal, job-embedded learning with colleagues, and there is not enough time to serve as a consistently effective ADEPT mentor or to complete all the work required by the ADEPT evaluation process;

(4) Professional development at both the state and local levels is primarily supply-driven. State and local priorities and program goals and objectives define the content of professional development. In addition, resource limits combined with a general goal of reaching as many teachers and principals as possible, can result in professional development that is marked more by its breadth than its depth. Hence, teachers and principals report participation in professional development on a large number of topics, little or no follow-up, and limited input in planning. This is not to suggest that federal, state and local priorities and goals should not be reflected in professional development. It is, however, to suggest that when professional development does not explicitly link attention to these goals and priorities to participants' needs and concerns, the professional development is likely to have limited payoff, except perhaps as a dissemination or communication activity;

(5) At the local level-perhaps as a reflection of the supply-driven system-professional development looks fragmented and appear to lack coordination. Professional development appears as a menu of events-including workshops, training, certification courses, and graduate courses. In some districts, strategic plans emphasize professional development as an ingredient in school improvement, but examples of comprehensive planning for professional development could not be found. Many principals report that planning professional development for their schools is one of their responsibilities, but they express frustration at the extent to which competing activities and priorities pull teaches away and make school-level activities difficult to plan. District staff and professional development providers express confidence that the professional development they provide is of high quality, but the is little evidence of formal evaluations of quality or impact.

Coastal Carolina University conducted case studies of the implementation of the standards in a representative sample of middle schools in the state. Generally, each school seemed to be involved in the standards-based approach to instruction and standards based instruction was supported by principals and teachers. Principals reported encouraging teachers to use the standards and teachers felt the consistency across schools was a benefit. According to principals and teachers, students who did well in the standards curriculum were motivated, had strong skills and supportive parents. Principals perceived that students had more difficulties with mathematics than with language arts.

But some differences emerged among the schools when the schools were sorted by student socio-economic status (SES). When asked for negative effects of the standards-based approach, teachers and principals in lower SES schools tended to focus on lack of student academic ability. Many of their students were operating below grade level. Principals in higher SES schools were more concerned about teacher professional development. They felt that their students were capable. Principals and teachers in lower SES schools were concerned about students below grade level who did not have prerequisite skills and about the lack of parental support. The researchers concluded that schools that have a higher proportion of students below grade level exhibit less ownership of the standards-based approach and the PACT assessment process, attributing underperformance to student abilities and the level of parental support (Coastal Carolina University, 2000).

Anecdotal evidence indicates that availability of instructional materials to support the standards is uneven across schools and districts. Schools that have been underfunded over time may not have sufficient instructional materials to support instruction. For many teachers and schools the introduction of the science standards magnifies the resource discrepancy. Comprehensive science instruction has not been a consistent part of the elementary curriculum. The certification requirements for elementary education require only a minimal amount of coursework in the sciences. Elementary teachers are facing a multi-faceted dilemma: insufficient preparation to teach the sciences, rigorous academic content standards, and shortages of instructional materials to support science instruction.

Support for Student Mastery of the Standards

An important provision of the SC Education Accountability Act of 1998 requires academic plans to be developed "for each student in grades three through eight who lacks the skills to perform at his current grade level based on assessments results, school work, or teacher judgment" (§59-18-500). School districts are given flexibility to select instructional strategies and materials that best match the academic needs of their students. The strategies selected by districts to meet the academic plans initiative during the 1999-2000 school year were the focus of a study conducted by the SC Educational Policy Center in collaboration with the Education Oversight Committee and the State Department of Education.

This study was designed to identify the instructional strategies used by state schools to improve student achievement, to solicit the principal's views on the effectiveness of various strategies, to collect descriptive data on summer school and extended day programs and to better understand the issues and challenges faced by schools in implementing student academic plans. A sample of 175 schools was drawn from 18 districts serving all geographic areas of SC. Principals were mailed surveys in May 2000 and 77 percent of the surveys were returned.

The responses of principals indicated the following major findings:

- The most frequently used academic plan strategies were parent conferencing (95%), computer-assisted learning (85%), additional instructional materials (82%), and summer school (81%);
- Small class size was judged to be the most effective strategy followed by small group instruction, added periods (of math or language arts), intensive in-class help by a teacher, and teacher aides;
- Students further below grade level were judged less likely to benefit from participation in any of the academic plan strategies. Strategies were judged to be most effective for students less than one year below grade level;
- Fifty-eight percent of the principals reported that 61% to 100% of the parents attended the plan conferences;
- Summer schools were operated for an average of 4 !/2 hours per day for 20 days;
- Fifty-three percent of the principals said that their schools offered after-school programs and served an average of 53 student each day. The programs operated an average of 51 days for 95 minutes per day and were staffed by certified teachers (48%), teacher aides (13%), and a variety of other staff and volunteers;
- Before-school programs were operated in only 9 of 133 schools in the sample;
- Principals noted that their greatest challenges involved difficulty in getting parent participation, lack of time for conferencing and other plan requirements, and lack of funding for materials/programs and transportation;
- In regard to additional support needed, principals most often stated that they needed additional staff positions to help with the plan requirements and additional funding.

Support for Parental Understanding of the Standards

Materials summarizing the mathematics and English language arts standards for parents were distributed to every district superintendent and school principal. Similar summaries are under development for science and social studies.

The EOC's Public Awareness campaign has issued a series of announcements and materials to encourage parents to be involved with their children's education. Two television announcements, two radio announcements, billboards, a toll-free number and printed materials have been distributed. A pamphlet, "Tips to Help Your Children Succeed in School" has been distributed to parents directly and through schools, the Department of Social Services and pediatricians.

Through passage of the Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act in 2000, the General Assembly established a framework for actions to increase and sustain parental involvement. The Act calls upon state, district and school leaders to heighten awareness of the importance of parents' involvement in the education of their children throughout their schooling; encourage the establishment and maintenance of parent-friendly school settings; and emphasize that when parents and schools work as partners, a child's academic success can best be assured.

Among the requirements of Act 402 are that the Governor require state agencies that serve families and children to collaborate and establish networks with schools to heighten awareness of the importance of parental influence on the academic success of their children and to encourage and assist parents to become more involved in their children's educational. Goals, objectives and an evaluation component for parental involvement are to be included in district and school long-range improvement plans. The State Superintendent is charged with promotion and training to ensure that best practices, partnerships, and parent-friendly school settings are implemented. Parental involvement expectations are to be a component of the superintendent and principals evaluations. The EOC is charged with surveying parents to determine if efforts are successful and to publish jointly with the State Superintendent informational materials for parents and teachers.

Implementation of Standards-Based Assessments

The State Department of Education has initiated the development of assessments to measure student learning of the content standards. According to the schedule published by the State Department of

Education in April 2000, the implementation of the new assessments should be accomplished in the years noted below:

Table Nine
SDE Timeline for Implementation of New Assessments
April 2000

Test	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Readiness 1, 2				✓					
PACT 1, 2				Optional					
PACT 3-8 Math, ELA	✓								
PACT 3-8 Science				✓					
PACT 3-8 Social Studies					✓				
PACT Exit Exam Math, ELA					✓				
PACT Exit Exam Science						✓			
PACT Exit Exam Social Studies							✓		
End-of-Course Math					✓				
End-of-Course, ELA						✓			
End-of-Course Science								✓	
End-of-Course, Social Studies									✓
Alternate Assess.			✓						

Source: State Department of Education, 2000.

The schedule for implementation of new assessments is at a critical juncture. Although the content standards are written to drive instruction at each grade level, the assessment program provides tremendous motivation for teachers to incorporate the new standards in their instruction. Policy Studies Associates in their evaluation of professional development reported data that less than 48 percent of high school teachers are participating in professional development on the standards. South Carolina must make some very practical decisions regarding implementation:

- Will the high school standards be implemented or delayed because of the protracted schedule for implementation of the end-of-course assessments?
- Could passage of the end-of-course assessments be accepted in lieu of the high school exit examination?
- Does the schedule for implementation of the new high school exit exam create confusion over graduation requirements?

Teachers express continuing concerns for professional development on assessment. Asked to identify the three most important topics for their own professional development, teachers listed in-depth study of the subject they teach (41 percent); aligning curricula, instructional and assessment with state standards (40 percent); and instructional strategies for students with learning difficulties or who are at risk of student failure (37 percent). Although 78 percent of teachers reported participating in professional development on assessment, the activities ranged from less than two hours to more than three days. Forty percent of teachers participated in the activities lasting less than one day (Policy Studies Associates, 2000).

Sustaining Standards-Based Reform

The National Education Goals Panel released a report in December 2000 that identified critical elements of standards-based reform success stories. The report, Bringing All Students to High Standards, is the result of a yearlong study of successes in local schools. The report identified common strategies that formed the basis for success. The strategies are the following:

- *High expectations for all students.* Schools that succeeded expected all students to achieve at high levels, especially those who traditionally have not been expected to perform well.

- *Consistency over time.* Successful policies have remained in place for years, enabling schools to make needed changes and produce results.

- *Clear accountability.* Schools that succeeded had to produce results and knew that there were consequences for failure.

- *Using data to drive improvement.* Schools used performance information to determine where they were succeeding and where they needed to direct their efforts.

- *Improving teacher quality.* Schools and school systems placed a great emphasis on enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers, particularly those already in the classroom.

- *Expanding the school day and year.* Schools provided additional instructional time for students who were struggling to meet high standards.

- *Supporting children and families.* Schools made services available to children and their families so that health and social problems would not be an impediment to learning.

- *Support from the business community.* Schools and schools systems formed alliances with businesses to promote the common agenda of improving schools and drew on the resources businesses could provide.[6]

[6] For additional information on Bringing All Students to High Standards, contact the web site: http://www.negp.gov/.

Development, Establishment, Implementation and Maintenance of the Accountability System

The Education Accountability Act of 1998 calls for "the acceptance of the responsibility for improving student performance and taking actions to improve classroom practice and school performance by the Governor, the General Assembly, the State Department of Education, colleges and universities, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community" (§59-18-900).

With respect to those actions required by the Education Accountability Act, the State has made progress by establishing the policies and guidelines for the program. The State Department of Education provides initial technical assistance to the twenty-nine (29) schools in districts identified as "in greatest need of technical assistance."

Table Ten
Implementation Status of Education Accountability Act Provisions
for
State Agencies

Statutory Citation	Provision	Status
59-18-300	Content Standards	Math, English, Science and Social Studies adopted
59-18-360	Cyclical Review of Standards	Mathematics completed in Sept. 2000, ELA begins in January 2001
59-18-310-370	Assessments	Math, English implemented in grades 3-8
59-18-910	Levels of difficulty reports	Ongoing, with assessments as developed
59-18-340	Norm-referenced test	Terra Nova administered in 1999 and 2000; alignment study conducted in 2000
59-18-370	Longitudinal matched data	SDE to develop
59-18-350	PSAT/PLAN offered to grade 10	Implemented in 1998
59-18-500	Academic Plans	Implemented in 1998
59-18-700	Instructional materials alignment	Incorporated into SDE adoption cycle
59-18-710	Revise accreditation criteria	Adopted by SBE in Fall 2000
59-18-900	Annual report card	Development on schedule for 2001 publication
59-18-900	Criteria for performance ratings	Adopted by EOC in December 2000
59-18-1100	Gold and Silver Awards criteria	To be established in February 2001
59-18-1110	Flexibility Guidelines	Adopted by SBE in Fall 2000
59-18-1300	District Accountability Systems	Implemented in 1999
59-18-1500-1510	Intervention and Assistance	Currently serving 29 schools in 7 districts
59-18-1510	Criteria for review team	Established in Spring 1999
59-18-1520	Teacher specialists	Criteria set in 1998; implemented in 1999 in 7 districts
59-18-1530	Principal specialists	Criteria set in 1999; implemented in 1999 in one school; evaluation underway
59-18-1540	Principal Mentoring program	Established and implemented in 1998
59-18-1550	Recertification credit	SDE establishes criteria
59-18-1560	Retraining Grants	Implemented in 1998, evaluated in 1999 and 2000
59-18-1560	Public School Assistance Fund (SBE)	Not established
59-18-1700	Public Awareness Campaign	Initiated in 1999
59-18-1900	Alternative Schools Grants	Implemented in 1998
59-18-1910	Homework Center Grants	Implemented in 1998 in 7 districts
59-18-1920	Modified School Year Grant	Implemented in 1998 in 5 districts
59-18-1930	Professional Development Review	Completed in December 2000
59-24-10	New Principal Assessment	Incorporated in SDE actions
59-24-30	Professional Development Plans for administrators	Under SDE development
59-24-50	Training with School Councils	Currently SICA provides training
59-24-80	Principal Induction Program	Implemented in 1998
59-6-100	EOC established	Implemented in 1998
59-6-110	Accountability Division established	Implemented in 1998
Section 10	Parent Involvement Task Force	Recommendations formed basis for Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act of 2000
Section 12	Class Size Study	SDE Study initiated in 11 districts

School Improvement Strategies

Changing the results of schools requires changes in the resources and operations and changes in the ways that educators accomplish their responsibilities. South Carolina has invested in the change processes over the last eight years, beginning with the curriculum frameworks anchored in the work of the 1992 Curriculum Congress. Over the last eight years the following foundation elements for success in standards-based education have been laid:

- Transformation of the curriculum from frameworks through gateway grade standards to nationally recognized standards for each grade;
- In grades 3-8, implementation of standards-based assessments in mathematics and English language arts;
- A series of professional development investments to include $27.7 million in federal and state funds (over 5 years) in the state systemic initiative for mathematics and science education; annual investments in the Roper Mountain Science Center, the Geographic Alliance, the Writing Improvement Network, and the Accelerated Schools Project; in FY 2001, over $5 million annually in Reading Recovery and the Governor's Institute on Reading; and the appropriation of $25 million annually for local innovation;
- IN 1993, EIA remedial and compensatory funds were refocused on early childhood devel9pment for students in grades K-3 and academic interventions for students in grades 4-12. Over $135 million is appropriated annually for these purposes;
- State investments in full-day kindergarten, lower class sizes in grades 1-3 and, since FY2000 First Steps to School Readiness; and
- For students experiencing difficulties, alternative schools, homework centers and summer school.

Specific interventions are designed for schools that are rated Below Average and Unsatisfactory. The State Department of Education is responsible for providing technical assistance through the following programs and services: principal mentoring, principal specialists, teacher retraining grants, teacher specialists, homework centers and direct assistance from SDE staff. The SDE is implementing these strategies in the seven school districts identified under the EIA-districts in greatest need of technical assistance program. Only in their second year, it is premature to evaluate these programs at this time.

Each year the EOC does evaluate the retraining grants given to schools is districts identified as in greatest need of technical assistance, and when the rating system is fully implemented, to schools identified as Below Average or Unsatisfactory. Generally, the schools have had insufficient time to institutionalize the new learning; however, few of the schools provided teachers with time for feedback and practice (a finding similar to that found in the statewide professional development study). Confounding success of the retraining grants and the consistent implementation of new knowledge and skills are the principal and teacher turnover rates. Over half of the schools had different principals in 1999-2000 from 1998-1999. Teacher turnover rates hovered near 30 percent in many of the schools. Instability negatively impacts the long-range plans of the school and progress in student achievement. Teacher turnover also lessens the effectiveness of the Retraining Grant program because teachers are not able to apply the knowledge they gain through the professional development activities before they go to another district to teach.

There are gaps in the technical assistance model defined under the EAA. If the improvement strategies are limited to those specifically provided in the EAA, then there are no strategies to address the full structure of decision-making at the district level. Improving the quality of board and central administrative decision making is omitted from the statutory menu of improvement strategies. Systemic change requires that the entire system be addressed. The technical assistance model also relies heavily on teacher specialists assigned to each school. In a period of teacher shortages statewide, the State Department of Education may have difficulty placing significant number of teacher specialists without creating problems in other SC schools. Alternative, but equally effective, strategies may be necessary in selected settings.

The Functioning of the Public Education System

In April 1999 the South Carolina Supreme Court declared that the SC Constitution included an affirmative duty to provide adequate schooling. The opinion of the Court provides that "The South Carolina Constitution's education clause required the General Assembly to provide the opportunity for each child to receive a minimally adequate education." The Court continued by defining a minimally adequate education required by the Constitution "to include providing students adequate and safe facilities in which they have the opportunity to acquire:

1. the ability to read, write and speak the English language, and knowledge of mathematics and physical science;
2. a fundamental knowledge of economic, social and political systems, and of history and governmental processes; and
3. academic and vocational skills."

Source: SC School Boards Association 1999

Local Capacity to Reach National Levels of Achievement

Does every child in South Carolina have access to "a minimally adequate education", particularly when adequacy is defined as the ability to compete successfully with students from across the country or globe?

The link between educational attainment and economic independence is an important element of the South Carolina Department of Commerce's efforts to vitalize the South Carolina economy. Despite a growing economy in the upstate and a strong tourism economy in the coastal regions, growth is very limited in the lower and Pee Dee regions. An external study of the capacity of South Carolina found that the level of education, dependency on transfer payments for personal income, and the underperformance of schools in rural settings hampered significant gains in state performance. The Department of Commerce study recommended the following (SC Department of Commerce/Growth Strategies, Incorporated, 1999):

- Support and expand initiatives of the Governor to improve public pre-kindergarten through high school education in South Carolina . . .The disparity between urban and rural school districts is wide and most urban districts have serious problems in most areas. Current efforts are evolutionary when a revolution is needed;
- Continue to use a portion of new capital funds for school renovation to support introduction of information technology tools in the education process. . .While many schools have successfully applied these technologies on a limited scale, no school or district has introduced such technologies on a broad scale;
- Using the recommendations prepared by the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce Education Committee as a roadmap, the business community should continue to expand their support for programs that provide funding, scholarships, equipment, teacher training, and technical assistance to individual schools and school districts willing to commit to revolutionary change in the way they deliver education to the state's youngsters;
- Support the South Carolina's Department of Education's continued efforts to completely overhaul and modernize curriculum, especially in middle schools and high schools, as called for in recent actions of the State legislature . . .If there isn't sufficient time to offer [new content], South Carolina should be prepared to extend the school year;
- The South Carolina Department of Education should expand its efforts to improve the quality of teachers in elementary and secondary schools throughout the state by working with colleges to upgrade teacher education curricula, by strengthening teacher qualification standards, and by increasing the salaries of teachers who meet these standards and achieve improved student performance goal. . .The key to quality education is quality teachers. To attract and retain qualified teachers, we must be able to offer competitive salaries.

Rural South Carolina holds one of the keys to South Carolina's improvement. Whatever the data source, KidsCount, State Department of Education, Bureau of Research and Statistics, children growing up in rural South Carolina are more likely to enter school without the prerequisite base of school success. The health profile of students in rural schools is less optimistic than their urban counterparts. Once in school they are more likely to be taught by teachers who are new to the profession, have a bachelor's degree only and who have been at the school for a brief number of years. The Rural School and Community Trust points out that one-fourth of US school children go to school in rural areas [Note: In South Carolina 37 percent of the state's public school students and 41 percent of its private school enrollment are in rural settings.] The Trust examined a number of demographic and educational factors to answer two questions: How important is it to the overall educational performance of each state to explicitly address the particular needs of schools serving its rural communities? And Given conditions in the state's rural schools and communities how urgent is it in each state that policy-makers develop explicit rural education policies?

Results of the "importance analysis" ranked SC 19th in importance among the states (Very Important) and 8th in urgency (Urgent) (Rural School and Community Trust, 2000).

South Carolina's African-American students perform less well than their white counterparts. The achievement gap is the focus of study and action by the Governor, the State Superintendent, the General Assembly, the Education Oversight Committee and others. The EOC has included an incentive within the improvement rating for gains by historically underachievement groups of students. South Carolina achievement data indicate the following gaps in performance:

	Students		
	All	White	African-American
Scholastic Assessment Test (2000):			
Composite Score	966	1022	833
Composite SAT score, 20 units	1054	1092	910
% meeting LIFE requirements	30.0	43.9	10.7
ACT (2000)			
Composite	19.3	20.9	16.4
Advanced Placement (2000)			
% earning a 3-5 score	55.2	60.1	23.9
BSAP Exit Examination (2000)			
Reading	82.7	90.9	69.8
Math	77.3	87.8	60.4
Writing	86.6	94.5	74.3
PACT (2000)			
Math-% Basic and Above	72	82	58
English language arts-%Basic & Above	74	84	61
Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery	85.2	90.7	79.6

Simulations of the school ratings methodologies confirm the limited results from blending minimal community capacity, inadequate educational resources, and limited access to strong teaching. The absolute performance rating, that is, the comparison of a school's performance against the target [Note: the comparison is made to the 2001 expectation, 80 % of the 2010 target]. Table Eleven on the next page provides a demographic profile of schools by absolute rating category, demonstrating the differences in academic culture and achievement reflected disproportionately in rural and high poverty schools.

Table Eleven
Demographic Profile of Schools
Absolute Achievement Rating

Variable	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Avg.	Unsatisfactory
Number of Schools	86	203	293	196	66
Total # Students in all schools in rating (Gr. K-12)	55186	125162	157478	98649	29805
Avg. Pct. Sp. Ed. / School	8.6	9.7	11.2	10.7	11.6
Avg. % Advanced	16.0	8.4	4.1	1.8	0.7
Avg. % Proficient	38.2	28.3	19.5	11.9	6.6
Avg. % Basic	34.4	41.0	42.2	38.1	30.1
Avg. % Below Basic	11.4	22.3	34.2	48.3	62.6
Avg. % Below Basic 2	6.2	11.0	15.1	18.5	18.8
Avg. % Below Basic 1	5.2	11.3	19.1	29.8	43.8
Avg. % Free/reduced Lunch	22.9	39.7	57.1	74.0	84.7
% in Category Mid-Size City	28.8	26.0	18.3	20.4	35.9
% in Category Suburban	58.8	40.1	26.0	7.0	3.1
% in Category Small Town	2.5	14.1	20.7	33.3	23.4
% in Category Rural	10.0	19.8	35.1	39.3	37.5

Other Studies and Reviews Required by Law

Professional Development Review

The Education Accountability Act called for a comprehensive review of professional development to include a review of what is offered, how it is offered, the support given to implement skills acquired from professional development and how the professional development enhances the academic goals outlined in district and school strategic plans. That study was completed under contract to Policy Studies Associates of Washington, DC. Final data and recommendations were presented to the EOC in November 2000. The full report is available from the EOC. The recommendations include the following:

Recommendations on Improving Quality of Professional Development

- The State Department should disseminate and build consensus around the SC Professional Development Standards.
- The State Department of Education should establish a professional development accountability system.
- The State Department of Education and school districts should review the need for professional development on assessment, using assessment data to plan school reform and reviewing student work to assess mastery of standards.

Recommendations on Enhancing Local Professional Development Capacity

- The State Department of Education and partners should provide professional development on professional development for principals, other school leaders, and districts staff.
- District leaders should establish district professional development working groups charged with strengthening local professional development systems.
- The Office of Teacher Certification and Renewal (the state and districts should continue to strengthen local organization and operation of ADEPT and take full advantage of ADEPT as a resource for professional development and improvement.
- Districts should support increased teacher participation in the NBPTS certification process.

Recommendations for Finding Time and Resources for Professional Development

- School and district leaders should alter school and district schedules to include more time for professional development.
- Limiting spending to high-quality professional development that supports core state and local priorities will maximize existing state and local professional development resources.

Parent Involvement Task Force

The Education Accountability Act of 1998 (Section 10) directed the Committee to establish a Parent Involvement Task Force to "review current state programs and policies for participation in their children's education." The Committee's Parent Involvement Task Force recommended twenty-five (25) state actions and nineteen (19) local actions providing 1) a framework to encourage parent involvement; 2) requirements for parent involvement training; 3) emphasis on parent responsibility for their children's success in school; 4) increased opportunity and flexibility for parent-teacher contacts; and 5) a system for monitoring and evaluating parent involvement efforts. The recommendations were enacted with the Parent Involvement in Their Children's Education Act of 2000. Implementation is scheduled to begin in 2001.

Middle Grades Project

The EOC, in cooperation with the Middle Grades with the Middle Grades Initiative, has funded a second year study with Coastal Carolina University. The study is to examine the quality of instruction and the availability of materials to support standards-based instruction in middle schools. The study is a follow-up to the 1999-2000 study reported earlier in this work.

Class Size Study

The State Department of Education is conducting a study to determine the impact of reducing class size in grades one through three. Eleven districts are included in the study and nationally norm-referenced testing data available for all years within the funding cycle are included.

Examination of the Program Serving Four Year Olds

The EOC requested a study of the program serving four-year-olds. The literature review focusing on state-level policies and funding has been completed. Other aspects of the study are in the design stage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to heighten the success of South Carolina's educational improvement efforts:

1. State and local improvement efforts must prepare schools to serve students exhibiting the most severe academic needs (that is, those students who are scoring at Below Basic 1 levels) using resources differently and employing supplemental strategies so that the students' potential to be independent, successful adults is not compromised;

2. The closing of the achievement gap between students of differing racial/ethnic, economic and geographic groups should be of the highest priority at the classroom, school, district and state levels;

3. The delivery of technical assistance to underachieving schools should be expanded and/or restructured to include systemic efforts at the board and district administrative levels and to overcome the barriers of principal and teacher turnover and educator shortages;

4. Professional development on the standards and the assessments should be restructured to provide time for initial learning, implementation, feedback and practice in accordance with national and state standards for professional development. Other recommendations regarding professional development are detailed on page 22 of this report;

5. Strong, systemic efforts (state, district and school) should be enacted to ensure timely implementation of standards-based curricula at the high school level;

6. Aggressive strategies to increase the percentage of students earning a high school diploma should be implemented;

7. Opportunities for parents to attain educational credentials and to serve as involved role models for their children should be expanded; and

8. An interactive, multi-agency data system should be implemented to ensure that factors impacting on student achievement could be explored fully at all system levels.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Statement of Purpose

This, and the Status and Fiscal Impact Report it summarizes, are submitted pursuant to 2000 Part 1B Budget Proviso 42.7 (Proviso) and an extension of the filing date. The status portion presents the project's progress and research on the statutes and standards relevant to state government's provision of access to its electronic information and technology to persons with functional impairments (essentially physical disabilities). The fiscal impact portion provides estimates of the costs for state government to comply with these statutes and standards. These estimates and the report's conclusions suggest possible considerations for the General Assembly regarding state and local governments' efficient and cost effective implementation of these goals.

Background

The Proviso creates a Partnership composed of the School for the Deaf and Blind (School) and the Office of Information Resources (OIR) to coordinate and oversee the efforts of an Assistive Technology Committee (Committee) to study, coordinate, and build upon, the access to state government information technology provided to South Carolinians with functional impairments. The Committee includes representatives from the Public Service Commission (PSC), State Library, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Center for Assistive Technology, in addition to the School and OIR. The Proviso authorizes this Committee to "determine relevant standards and probable fiscal impact of state government compliance with" these standards and "to establish five or more centers" to better assess the types and locations of assistive technology required to provide persons with functional impairments with access to the state government's electronic information and technology. The Committee has access to $300,000 from the Dual Party Relay Service Operating Fund for these activities. The Proviso expires on June 30, 2001.

The Committee organized into workgroups which:

- identified and worked with entities engaged in providing access to information technology for persons with impairments,
- identified the equipment, programs and training necessary to make publicly available state government personal computers accessible to persons with impairments,
- found suitable locations for locating five or more such pilot centers,
- identify Web Page issues and assistance for agencies to make them accessible, and
- gathered additional information to help inventory existing state agency assistive technology needs and predict the fiscal impact of statutory compliance.

Some of the activities have been completed, while others (e.g., implementation and assessment of pilot centers and training) will continue until the term of the Proviso expires.